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My fieldwork in 1970 was planned to obtain Orokaiva texts describing and explaining the Orokaiva exchange system. In Sivepe, the principal village of my 1966-67 research, I found two very good Orokaiva informants willing to record on tape their reply to the question: 'what is exchange?'. The recordings, made in a single day, took the form of dialogues between the two informants after the style of radio interviews. I did not intervene except at the outset, to present the question. 121 124 126

Prior to the taped discussion, I tried to establish whether Orokaiva have any notions corresponding to Mauss's theory of the three general obligations of giving, receiving and repaying gifts. I had no difficulty in finding strong prescriptions for the first of these, namely giving. As for receiving and repaying, I searched assiduously for evidence of a general obligation but could find only a number of specific contexts where repayment was obligatory as well as some ritual contexts where receiving was obligatory. On the other hand, the general obligation to give turned out to be a key principle of Orokaiva ideology. 437

The verb for making a gift is *ikari* which also means 'to put down, to forward, to throw away' and in sexual intercourse, to ejaculate. In general, therefore, *ikari* implies a recipient, but not invariably. *Ikari* is ubiquitous in everyday life. A person makes and receives probably dozens of gifts in an average day. Nearly all these are small gifts which in themselves have little economic value: dishes of cooked taro, coconuts, areca nuts and the 'fixing' of betel nut, tauga nuts, tobacco and paper for rolling cigarettes. Some of these occasions for *ikari* involve two persons, donor and recipient, but many others involve several, namely one donor and several recipients. Coconuts, betel nuts, tauga nuts, tobacco are usually shared out by those who happen to have a supply to all those who happen to be around when the sharing out is done. The term for sharing out is *hande ari*; the word *hande* may be glossed as 'generous', 'generosity'. It applies irrespective of the economic value of the objects shared out. A man generous and clever in giving is called a *hande embo*. 146 437

This concept is distinct from that of reciprocity; the generous man is not, of course, he who gives when he expects a big return, but he who gives when he expects none. This aspect of *hande ari* is emphasised in ideological discourse, as an example of which I was quoted a simple story which, so I was told, Orokaiva parents teach their children. Some variants of this story are of great anthropological interest but the Orokaiva children's version given to me has the form of a simple moral tale. The hero and his wife, both filthy, ill-dressed, covered in scabies, came from the coast to an inland village as part of a visiting party. The other members of the party were received hospitably and invited to stay in one or another of houses in the host village. The dishevelled couple, however, were left standing in the burning sun, as nobody wanted them for exchange partners. (Gift exchange partnerships between individuals tend to be established by just this kind of invitation by a man from the host group to a stranger from the guest group. When the stranger leaves for his home, his host

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437 will make him a present; when the host village makes a return visit to the village of their previous guests, individual partnerships tend to be maintained, so that each man can make a return gift to his previous host.)

Finally a girl whose father was absent from the village invited the two strangers into her house. The father, upon his return home, accepted the hero as guest and partner and performed all the proper duties of a host tending their hair, dressing them in new raiment, feeding them, presenting them with gifts. When the people of the host village went down to the coast to return the visit, they were received most stingily, except for the man who had hosted the hero. For the hero turned out to be a man of fabulous riches with which he loaded the only guest who had given evidence of a spirit of generosity.

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196 The hero's name, Javaite Poromo, is said to mean 'giving food to friends', a gloss I was unable to check as the words are not otherwise part of current Orokaiva vocabulary. 'Javaite' is called out at feasts in the sense of 'come hither'. The conclusion to this tale is a long recitation by Javaite Poromo on the rules of gift exchange; he is thus presented as the hero who established this institution among Orokaiva. The rules, as stated in the text, did no more than restate a number of rules I had already elicited in previous interviews and to which reference will be made below. The essential point, for the present, is that the *hande embo* is he who gives without thought of return, in other words, for whom giving is a categorical imperative. It is reinforced by sanctions: 'If you don't give, you are bad, people will pull you down'.

Unlike Javaite Poromo, most men have limited resources. Nonetheless, they follow the same rules of gift exchange as he whose resources are infinite. He is the model all must follow. Now, from the tale quoted above, it is clear that the hero accepts the notion of debt: the hospitality he had received created a debt he was obliged to repay. The Orokaiva term for this concept is *tihaŋga*. The repayment of the debt then becomes a 'return' for the gift. The Orokaiva term for 'exchange' (*mine* or *minemine*) is simultaneously the term used to describe the 'return'. No terminological distinction is made between an exchange of gifts, or services, or other amicable prestations on the one hand and an exchange of injuries (murders, sorcery, thefts, etc.) on the other. The term for retribution as well as reward is *minemine*. In speeches by Orokaiva ideologists who wish to criticise the old order (where vendettas were just as prevalent as gift exchange) the term *minemine* is regularly used in the merely negative sense of the old days where a clan killing an enemy was thought to 'owe' a death to that enemy's clan and the enemy had a recognised right to make such retribution.

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196 The Javaite Poromo rules about the recognition and estimation of *tihaŋga* are complex. Balance is a basic factor, once it is recognised that *tihaŋga* has been incurred. When a return gift re-establishes balance, it is called *inono* (enough). Just what quantity counts as *inono* depends on context. All else being equal, gifts should be exactly balanced (*perukari*). Thus, at a feast taro bundles are, at some stage, tied to a pole. The height of the food pile is marked on the pole. So is the height of food pile that is received in return. Balance then means that the height of the two piles should be the same. The term *isapa* (little, too little) is used to signify that in the view of the recipient, the

repayment was too small. It is also used in the sense of 'earnest' of a repayment that will be made in the future. If the insufficiency complained of is not made up, effectively a *tihangā* remains. 1437 196

The term *pavonei* is used to indicate that the return payment is considered excessive. Far from being considered gratifying and proper, such a state of affairs is considered provocative and unfriendly. The principal meaning of *pavonei* is a stick planted in front of a coconut palm by a man who has taken some nuts and who thus acknowledges his debt. The setting up of a *pavonei* at a feast means thus to set up in the mind of the recipients of a repayment the consciousness that they are again indebted to their exchange partners. The act of setting up such a *pavonei* is often referred to as *kambari*, a verb that means principally 'to bite, to kill'. The effect of it is that the victims of the *pavonei* will themselves return an excessive repayment, and that the whole exchange will escalate to the distress of both parties. The outcome may either be war or, if relations between the parties become more amiable, one side may decide to call off the battle by restoring the balance.

A very different and entirely legitimate imbalance is what is called a *hande mine*. This is a gift such as should be made when returning a loaned object (implements, ceremonial paraphernalia etc.). It should also be added when repaying a gift made at a time of shortage when the donor himself was badly in need of the thing he gave away. A special case of this are the food gifts made to a bereaved family after a death (when the family may not garden, and when crops from the deceased's garden are no longer consumable by his family). The bereaved family must add a substantial *hande mine* to the repayment of such food gifts because of the presumption that the sudden unforeseeable demand made on the donor's food resources would create distress. The *hande mine*, if omitted, is said to create a *tihangā*. [168]

In some respects the notions about *hande mine* resemble what Sahlins said about the Maori notion of *hau*. The magnitude of the *hande mine* expected with the return of a borrowed object is not related to the length of time it has been kept, but rather to the success the borrower had with it. If a hunter catches nothing after borrowing a gun, he owes nothing. If he has a large bag, he is expected to be generous to the lender.

The question that concerns us here is to distinguish the situations where *tihangā* is created from those where it is not created. This is no easy matter especially because *tihangā* in close associations is extraordinarily hard to establish clearly. I have shown that Orokaiva householders do sometimes count as gifts meals of cooked vegetable presented to certain categories of kin; in comparison to western society far more things are counted in the balance. The crucial distinction seems to be that some debts are reclaimed while others are not. Debts incurred by a child may be claimed by the parents when the child is adult, but in fact the child may start quite early in making some prestations, viz. when he has a small garden of his own. There is nothing extraordinary in the pattern of household co-operation, but many things that in western society would be classified as co-operation are classified by Orokaiva after the model of *hande ari* and *tihangā*. 1439 598

It is therefore futile to seek to demonstrate an exchange ideology merely

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FIGURE 1. Ganda, Northern Province of Papua New Guinea (author's collection).

pereho, meaning bush pigs, a term they used so frequently that the first whites who tried to make ethnographic maps of the Northern District tried to find the exact location of the 'tribe' Orokaiva called the '*pereho*'. It was hard to put on the map, as the *pereho* category included quite different groups according to who was speaking. My concern was here to give the conceptual boundaries of the exchange universe in Orokaiva terms, but there are real geographical boundaries, different for each village, which correspond to such concepts. Williams (1930) already spoke of two systems of Orokaiva morality, one within the 'sympathy group' which is his term for the exchange universe, and another where there is, in principle, a permanent state of total war even though there will always be a few islands where trading partnerships are found.

IV

If semiotic analysis has no difficulty in revealing categories of balanced and negative reciprocity, what about Sahlins's most fruitful and original category, generalised exchange? It is possible to find a category of relations among Orokaiva where it is denied that any *tihanga* is ever recognised. There are plenty of gifts, but no gift would ever be explained as *mine* or *hande mine*. I doubt however whether that particular category corresponds to 'generalised reciprocity'.

It includes, first of all, *hande* on a very small scale, like a single coconut, areca

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196 nut or cigarette. Secondly it includes help in most everyday tasks, including help with housebuilding and the like. Thirdly, it includes the very important category of very close kin who are deemed to pool their resources. Thus bridewealth, mortuary and other big prestations involve, as a matter of course, an entire local plant emblem group where every member is expected to put in all he has. Such groups have corporate leaders, usually the oldest agnate and such leaders have supposedly full authority over all the group's resources. Within those narrow confines, they need not cajole like the *hande embo* but theoretically they can instruct. They always told me this. It so happened that I did not know any families who habitually followed such instructions. In any case it is at least theoretically possible to separate out a category of actions based on structuring principles such as 'verticality', 'horizontalty' rather than reciprocity.

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437 Orokaiva ethnosociology does not seem to recognise a category of rules that lies between incorporation and balanced exchange. Yet, Sahlins has argued, on what seems irrefutable evidence, that in societies such as Orokaiva 'balanced reciprocity is not the prevalent form of exchange' and even that it is 'inherently unstable' (1974: 223). According to him what is prevalent and stable is generalised exchange. Even if we subtract a little from Sahlins's generalisation to allow for the meticulous strategies of some leaders, for the tendency to abandon 'balance' where western money becomes important, for the horror of debt bondage found in egalitarian societies like Orokaiva, for pooling in corporate groups, we are still left with many facts of generalised reciprocity.

We must, moreover, reject any attempt to explain such facts as 'organisational', as mere strategising, in contrast with other tendencies of the system that might be termed 'structural'. Such an assumption, though common enough, implies that it is sometimes possible to explain the relation between a given material condition and a specific cultural norm by the mediation of a symbolic system (as we have been doing above) but that sometimes it is not possible; that when we are dealing with deviations from the norm such deviations require only a 'common sense' explanation.

What then are we to say of the innumerable transactional sequences where, in principle, one of the transactors is in debt, but where nobody is at all interested in balancing the account? The debts are not reckoned but if the creditor feels the need for some help, he goes to his debtor and asks him for it. Can such sequences be incorporated as part of the semiotic model we have outlined? We think they can. We cannot incorporate them as part of equivalence rules, because such rules normally, at least among Orokaiva, do specify strict balance. We can, however, deal with them under the heading of translation rules.

Let us say that for years A has been helping B in a long list of predicaments. B is trouble prone while A is solid. B is generous enough but he rarely has something to give. A tolerates the situation without demur because he likes the B household; he does not at all feel anxious about repayment. Nor does B feel particularly ashamed of his position. In such circumstances, there will be a long series of gifts, for which the translation rule will be something along the